

AVIAN FLU FACT SHEET, OCTOBER 2005

This Fact Sheet alerts Americans to the most recent occurrences of Influenza A H5N1 (avian influenza strain) in Asia. A number of countries are reporting cases of avian influenza, commonly referred to as "bird flu" in their domestic and wild bird populations. The H5N1 strain of influenza causes severe disease in domesticated fowl. In addition, there are confirmed cases of bird-to-human transmissions of avian influenza in the South East Asia region, many of which have resulted in death. Please visit the WHO website, http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/country/en/ for the most up to date information on the countries affected and the number of deaths.

The vast majority of the known human cases have resulted from direct contact with poultry, and there is only limited evidence to suggest possible human-to-human transmission. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the World Health Organization (WHO), and the State Department are concerned about the potential for human-to-human transmission of this highly dangerous flu strain, and are working closely with other partners in an effort to monitor the outbreak.

Concerns about the possibility of an avian influenza pandemic have prompted international and national efforts to institute pandemic preparedness measures. In keeping with the CDC and the WHO guidance, the Department of State is working with its embassies and consulates worldwide to prepare in the event of a pandemic. American citizens traveling to or living in countries where avian influenza is prevalent should consider the potential risks and keep informed of the latest medical guidance and information in order to make appropriate plans.

The Department, the CDC and the WHO have not issued any travel alerts or warnings for avian flu-infected areas. However, the CDC advises travelers to countries in Asia with documented H5N1 outbreaks to avoid poultry farms, contact with animals in live food markets, and any surfaces that appear to be contaminated with feces or fluids from poultry or other animals. In addition, the Department has asked its embassies and consulates to consider preparedness measures that take into consideration the fact that travel into or out of a country may not be possible, safe or medically advisable. Specific CDC travel information relating to avian influenza, including preventive measures is available at <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/avian/index.htm>. WHO guidance related to avian influenza is available at http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/en/.

A specific vaccine for humans that is effective against avian influenza has not yet been developed. Based upon limited data, the CDC has suggested that the anti-viral medication Oseltamavir (brand name-Tamiflu) may be effective in preventing or treating avian influenza. Using this input, the Department of State has decided to pre-position the drug Tamiflu at its Embassies and Consulates worldwide, for eligible U.S. Government employees and their families serving abroad. Tamiflu may not be readily available overseas and the State Department encourages American citizens traveling or living abroad that are interested in obtaining this medication to consult with their physician. There is no provision for the U.S. government to provide

American citizens traveling or living abroad with medications, including in the event of a pandemic.

Americans who are planning travel to a country that has reported the virus or who are concerned about the Avian flu are advised to monitor the CDC and the WHO web sites for the latest information.

Additional country information can be obtained from the Department of State's Consular Information Sheets at <http://travel.state.gov> and from the Department of State's toll-free number, 1-888-407-4747, or if calling from overseas, 202-501-4444. CDC Contact Information:

Public Inquiries:

English (888) 246-2675

Spanish (888) 246-2857

TTY (866) 874-2646

Mon-Fri 8am-11pm EST

Sat-Sun 10am-8pm EST

Address:

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

1600 Clifton Rd.

Atlanta, GA 30333

USA (404) 639-3311

WHO Liaison Office in Washington, DC

Contact Information:

Telephone: (202) 331-9081

Facsimile: (202) 331-9097

Address:

WHO Liaison Office

1775 K Street, N.W., Suite 430

Washington, D.C. 20006 USA